

Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology: Evolution of the Field and Birth of a Journal

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The roots of clinical and diagnostic laboratory immunology are deeply embedded in the history of bacteriology and subsequently microbiology, immunology, and the associated clinical disciplines. Insights into host-microbe interactions in these areas led to tests for the antibodies to infectious agents, autoantibodies, and subsequently cellular immunity. Clinical needs for laboratory testing for the competence of T cells, B cells, macrophages, and natural killer cells have led to the proliferation of the clinical immunology laboratories. During the past half century, such laboratories were initiated primarily through research enterprises. Over the past decade, standardization, quality control, and quality assurance emerged at the same time as the field of clinical and diagnostic laboratory immunology emerged from microbiology laboratories and from research immunology laboratories. During the 1980s and due in part to the rapidly developed need for information about HIV and AIDS, cellular immunology laboratories have been established throughout the world.

Early on, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) recognized the growing importance of laboratory immunology and fostered its growth in several domains. In 1974, a committee was founded by the late Irwin Neter which led to the creation of the American Board of Medical Laboratory Immunology in 1978. During the same period, the American Society for Microbiology published the first edition of the Manual of Clinical Immunology, having initiated this important endeavor with Noel R. Rose and Herman Friedman. In addition, the society under the direction of the late Mario Escobar, founded Division V—Clinical and Diagnostic Immunology. These landmark events provided a certifying board, a basis for setting and

monitoring standards and performance criteria, and a forum within ASM for members of this growing field.

During the same period, articles on diagnostic laboratory immunology were submitted and published more frequently in the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology*, in sibling journals of ASM, and elsewhere. From, 1983 to 1993, I had the privilege of serving as the immunology editor for the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* under the editorship of Henry D. Isenberg. Because the field had expanded significantly, Barbara Iglewski, chair of the ASM Publications Board, formed a committee chaired by James D. Folds in 1993 to examine the possibility of creating a journal devoted exclusively to clinical laboratory immunology. The committee rapidly determined that there was a need for such a publication and recommended that ASM proceed. Thus, *Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology* was created. It garnered material from outside traditional ASM sources and from both the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* and *Infection and Immunity* with encouragement from the respective editors in chief, Richard C. Tilton and Vincent A. Fischetti.

I was honored to be appointed editor in chief and with major efforts from many individuals in this field who serve(d) as editors (James D. Folds, David E. Normansell, Noel R. Rose, Stanley A. Schwartz, Steven C. Specter, Daniel P. Stites, and Theresa L. Whiteside), editorial board members, and contributors, *Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology* was launched in January 1994 and continues to prosper. The journal, which is bimonthly, has not ceased evolving and sets the pace for the field.

Just as ASM has evolved during its first century, the field of clinical immunology as well as its literature has emerged from classical immunochemistry into a new era of cellular immunology. *Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology* too will evolve, addressing the increasing utilization of laser technology, molecular diagnostics, robotics, and unique immune-based therapies in the next millennium.

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